



Renton Police Department

Business Watch News

November 2007

“Short Changed” and Other Scams

Editor’s Note: *The number of ways criminals will attempt to scam your business is roughly equivalent to the number of stars in the sky. I’ve included a few examples here, but there are many, MANY more. There is a myth that “smart people” aren’t victimized by scams, but it’s just that—a myth. Anyone can fall prey to a scam, no matter how well-educated they are or how much experience they have.*

The following websites have excellent fraud information: www.fraudtech.org, the Federal Citizen Information Center at www.pueblo.gsa.gov, and the National Consumer League’s Fraud Center at www.fraud.org. A book on fraud entitled How to Become a Professional Con Artist by Dennis Marlock, promises to be “as entertaining as it is informative.”

“Quick Change Thief”



A local crook named Lloyd uses the same methodology time and time again: He will approach a cashier, make small talk, and then ask to change five \$20 bills for a single \$100 bill. The cashier will take the five \$20 bills and hand Lloyd a single \$100 bill. Lloyd will turn away as if to put the money in his pocket and swap the \$100 for a \$10 bill. Then he will turn back to the cashier and indicate that he was only given a \$10 bill. The cashier exchanges the \$10 bill for a second \$100 bill. The scam is complete, and Lloyd walks away with \$90 that belongs to the business.

“The Short Count,” a.k.a. “Change Raising”

The con artist purchases a low priced item (less than a dollar) and pays with a ten-dollar bill. The cashier gives him change. The con man offers the cashier ten one-dollar bills in exchange for the ten-dollar bill he used to make the original purchase. The con gives the cashier nine one-dollar bills and a ten-dollar bill (nineteen dollars). At this point the clerk holds ten dollars that belong to the store and nine dollars that belong to the con. When the cashier notices the mistake (or the con man points it out) and realizes she is holding nineteen dollars instead of ten, the con immediately says, “I’ll add another dollar to the \$19 I gave you in exchange for a twenty.” The con hands the cashier a dollar and takes the twenty, leaving the store with a ten-dollar profit.



What to Do?



Beating such con artists is very easy. All you have to do is CONDUCT ONE TRANSACTION AT A TIME. Complete the sale and give them their change. If they ask for more change, treat it as a separate transaction. Close the cash drawer between transactions as a reminder to yourself.

Worth noting: One of the reasons these scams work is because con artists are masters of distraction, simultaneously carrying out several activities (making a purchase, asking for change, rummaging in pockets, counting bills, exchanging bills).

Con artists will often prey on less experienced cashiers, including teens and young adults, in locations such as fast food restaurants and convenience stores.

Crimes Occurring on Business Property For the Months of September and October, 2007

COMMERCIAL ROBBERY**LOSS**

3000 block NE Sunset Blvd
7:23 p.m.

A pharmacy employee was helping a customer when she heard someone call out behind her. She turned to find a subject wearing a "Jason" mask. The employee thought it was a co-worker playing a joke until a second subject jumped over the counter. The first suspect waved a gun and demanded narcotics. The suspects took the narcotics and ran. Another employee grabbed one of the suspects and ripped off his mask and backpack. A search for the suspects had negative results. The recovered backpack contained narcotics and an air gun.

\$201
(recovered)

2000 block Benson Rd S
8:53 p.m.

The suspect entered the business and began looking at a magazine. When the employee greeted the suspect, she saw that his face was covered. The suspect displayed a handgun and the employee ran to a different area of the business. The suspect went behind the counter by the cash register and took the victim's purse, which contained personal property and the business's receipts. Officers and a police K-9 searched for the suspect with negative results.

\$850

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY**LOSS**

400 block Rainier Ave N

Officers responded to a commercial alarm and found an open door on a refrigerated semi-trailer. It appeared the padlock on the trailer had been pried off. There were no signs of forced entry to the business building. Officers were unable to secure the trailer and were unable to reach the business owners. There is no suspect information. *Crime Prevention Tip: Complete a Business Emergency Contact information form so Police know whom to contact in the event of an emergency. The form can be downloaded from the City website at www.rentonwa.gov, or call 425-430-7520 to have one mailed to you.*

unknown

2200 block East Valley Rd

Six full toolboxes were stolen from a storage unit. Entry was gained by removing the hinge pins from the door, then removing the door. *Crime Prevention Tip: Doors with exterior hinge pins should be fitted with non-removable pins or safety studs. A list of the brand and serial number of all valuables should be kept so that recovered stolen property can be returned to the owner.*

\$8,845

3700 block East Valley Rd

Business manager reports he was contacted by a detective who told him he had information about two flat screen televisions stolen from the business and that the business needed to report the televisions stolen. The televisions were stolen from rooms that were accessed with keys. The manager said there is surveillance video of the incident, but he did not know how to run the security system. *Crime Prevention Tips: Report stolen items to police immediately. Use good key control procedures so keys and secure areas can only be accessed by authorized personnel. Train employees how to use security systems.*

\$500

4300 block Talbot Rd S

Entry to the business was gained by reaching through the mail slot and opening the door. Once inside, suspect/s stole an unknown quantity of prescription drugs. Electronic items, such as laptop computers, were not taken. It appears that the suspect/s reached back through the mail slot and locked the door upon leaving the business. *Crime Prevention Tip: Doors with mail slots should be replaced with solid wood or metal doors. Doors with adjacent windows (which could be broken and reached through to unlock the door) should be fitted with locks that cannot be manipulated in this manner. An application of Security Film to windows that are adjacent to doors should be considered, to increase the strength of the glass.*

\$1,000

100 block Hoquiam PI NE

Sometime during the weekend suspect/s stole approximately 1000 feet of copper wire from the storage shed at a construction site. Entry to the shed was gained by removing the lock. Suspect/s also forced entry to a building under construction and stole a microwave oven. *Crime Prevention Tip: Copper wire and other items that are likely to be targeted by thieves should be delivered and installed during the week or stored off-site.*

\$1,800

Crimes Occurring on Business Property For the Months of September and October, 2007

COMMERCIAL BURGLARY

LOSS

1200 block Monster Rd SW	Suspect/s entered the fenced area of the business by walking around the gate. Inside, the suspect/s attempted to start two forklifts, extensively damaging the ignitions, before stealing a third forklift. The suspect/s used the forklift to lift the gate until it broke then drove the forklift outside the yard. It appears the forklift was loaded onto a vehicle. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: Heavy equipment should be disabled (remove battery, spark plug, etc.) during non business hours. GPS tracking devices can be installed on heavy equipment to aid in recovery in the event they are stolen.</i>	\$30,000 (recovered)
1200 block Edmonds Ave NE	Two projectors were stolen from separate rooms. The cable locks for the projectors were still on scene and appeared to be undamaged. There was no sign of forced entry, and security camera footage revealed no unusual activity.	\$2,098
600 block SW 10th St	Manager reports a large bin containing scrap metal was stolen from the business yard, and a forklift that did not belong to the business was left behind by the crooks. Entry to the yard was gained by cutting chains and the lock on a gate. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: Items of value that are likely to be targeted by thieves, such as large quantities of scrap metal, should be secured inside a building where thieves will have a more difficult time accessing them.</i>	\$5,000

Auto Thefts: There were 112 vehicles reported stolen in Renton during September and October of 2007.

Stolen Vehicle Recoveries: There were 26 vehicles stolen outside of Renton that were recovered in the City during September and October of 2007.

OTHER CRIMES OF INTEREST ON BUSINESS PROPERTY

1900 block Oakesdale Ave SW	Officers were dispatched to a report of an employee who threatened to bring a gun to the business. When the employee called the office to schedule a meeting, he stated "Maybe I should bring a gun over there." The employee was searched, and no weapons were found. The employee stated he was embarrassed by his poor choice of words and had no intention of bringing a gun. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: All threats should be taken seriously and reported.</i>
200 block S 3rd St	Officers observed the suspect standing over an employee, who was bleeding from the face and had a ripped shirt. The suspect had stolen small items from the store, was approached by an employee, and asked to pay for the items. The suspect paid for the items and was being escorted to the security office to complete paperwork formally trespassing him from the business. The suspect suddenly charged and "head-butted" the employee with sufficient force to knock the employee through the sliding exit doors and knock the doors off their tracks. The employee grabbed the suspect, who then punched the employee in the face several times. The suspect was arrested for Assault 4th Degree. <i>Crime Prevention Tip: Someone seemingly cooperative can suddenly turn violent. Treat every individual with caution; there are no "routine" criminals.</i>
900 block SW Grady Way	Officers were dispatched to a report of an attempted burglary. A private security officer observed the suspect using a four-foot crowbar to pry the business door. The security officer yelled at the subject, who got into a vehicle. Security walked around the car to get the license plate number and had get out of the way quickly to avoid being hit as the suspect drove away. Entry to the business was not gained.

Business Security Surveys Offered

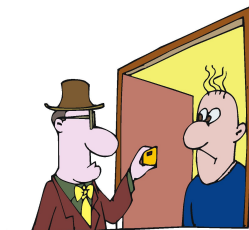


The Crime Prevention Unit of the Renton Police Department would like to offer you a free business security survey! We will come to your place of business and conduct a thorough survey of your property, then send you a written report with our recommendations for improving the safety and security of your business. To schedule your free survey, please call 425-430-7520.

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Prevent Identity Theft by “Opting-Out”



You can defend against identity theft by “opting out” of receiving unsolicited credit card offers.

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), the Consumer Credit Reporting Companies are permitted to include your name on lists used by creditors or insurers to make offers of credit or insurance. The FCRA also provides you the right to “opt out,” which prevents Credit Reporting Companies from providing your credit file information for credit or insurance offers.

If you choose to “opt out,” you will no longer be included in offer lists provided by the main four consumer credit reporting companies.

You can opt out online at www.optoutprescreen.com or by calling 1-888-5-OUPTOUT. Note that you will be asked for your social security number and birth date. If you choose not to provide this information, the bureaus will attempt to process your request without it.

Information provided by the AARP. For additional information on fraud protection, visit their website at www.aarp.org/wa.

CITY HALL PHONE NUMBERS

Information Desk	430-6400
Economic Development	430-6575
Fire Prevention	430-7000
Business Watch	430-7520
Block Watch	430-7521
Human Services	430-6650
City Clerk	430-6510
Utility Systems	430-7234
Police Department	430-7500
Code Enforcement	430-7269